

CAREER GUIDE FOR POLICE, FIRE, AND AMBULANCE DISPATCHERS

SOC Code: 43-5031

Pay Band(s): 3, 4, ([Salary Structure](#))

Standard Occupational Description:

Receive complaints from public concerning crimes and police emergencies. Broadcast orders to police patrol units in vicinity of complaint to investigate. Operate radio, telephone, or computer equipment to receive reports of fires and medical emergencies and relay information or orders to proper officials.

Police and State Police Dispatcher positions in the commonwealth are assigned to the following Role(s) in the [Emergency Services Career Group](#):

[Emergency Coordinator I](#)

[Emergency Coordinator II](#)

While Police Dispatchers and State Police Dispatchers within the Commonwealth are all located within the Emergency Services Career Group, individuals may want to pursue other staff or managerial opportunities within the Commonwealth depending upon individual training, education, knowledge, skills, abilities, and interests.

Other career groups that may be of interest are:

[Program Administration](#)

[Law Enforcement](#)

[Engineering Technology](#)

SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE, ABILITIES AND TASKS

(Technical and Functional Expertise)

Skills

Note: The technical and functional skills listed below are based on general occupational qualifications for Police, Fire and Ambulance Dispatchers commonly recognized by most employers. Typically, you will not be required to have all of the skills listed to be a successful performer. Recruitment and selection standards for an individual state job must be based on the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities for that job as indicated in the job announcement and job description in the Employee Work Profile.

1. Giving full attention to what other people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, asking questions as appropriate, and not interrupting at inappropriate times.
2. Talking to others to convey information effectively.
3. Actively looking for ways to help people.
4. Considering the relative costs and benefits of potential actions to choose the most appropriate one.
5. Adjusting actions in relation to others' actions.
6. Controlling operations of equipment or systems.

7. Communicating effectively in writing as appropriate for the needs of the audience.
8. Using logic and reasoning to identify the strengths and weaknesses of alternative solutions, conclusions or approaches to problems.
9. Teaching others how to do something.
10. Being aware of others' reactions and understanding why they react as they do.
11. Understanding written sentences and paragraphs in work related documents.
12. Watching gauges, dials, or other indicators to make sure a machine is working properly.
13. Understanding the implications of new information for both current and future problem solving and decision-making.
14. Identifying complex problems and reviewing related information to develop and evaluate options and implement solutions.
15. Monitoring/Assessing performance of yourself, other individuals, or organizations to make improvements or take corrective action.
16. Determining the kind of tools and equipment needed to do a job.
17. Conducting tests and inspections of products, services, or processes to evaluate quality or performance.
18. Identifying measures or indicators of system performance and the actions needed to improve or correct performance, relative to the goals of the system.
19. Determining how a system should work and how changes in conditions, operations, and the environment will affect outcomes.
20. Using mathematics to solve problems.
21. Determining causes of operating errors and deciding what to do about it.

Knowledge

Note: The technical and functional knowledge statements listed below are based on general occupational qualifications for Police, Fire and Ambulance Dispatchers commonly recognized by most employers. Typically, you will not be required to have all of the knowledge listed to be a successful performer. Recruitment and selection standards for an individual state job must be based on the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities for that job as indicated in the job announcement and job description in the Employee Work Profile.

The Knowledge of:

1. Transmission, broadcasting, switching, control, and operation of telecommunications systems.
2. Circuit boards, processors, chips, electronic equipment, and computer hardware and software, including applications and programming.
3. The structure and content of the English language including the meaning and spelling of words, rules of composition, and grammar.
4. Principles and methods for describing the features of land, sea, and air masses, including their physical characteristics, locations, interrelationships, and distribution of plant, animal, and human life.
5. Media production, communication, and dissemination techniques and methods. This includes alternative ways to inform and entertain via written, oral, and visual media.
6. Administrative and clerical procedures and systems such as word processing, managing files and records, stenography and transcription, designing forms, and other office procedures and terminology.

7. Relevant equipment, policies, procedures, and strategies to promote effective local, state, or national security operations for the protection of people, data, property, and institutions.
8. Principles and processes for providing customer and personal services. This includes customer needs assessment, meeting quality standards for services, and evaluation of customer satisfaction.
9. Principles and methods for moving people or goods by air, rail, sea, or road, including the relative costs and benefits.
10. Laws, legal codes, court procedures, precedents, government regulations, executive orders, agency rules, and the democratic political process.
11. The information and techniques needed to diagnose and treat human injuries, diseases, and deformities. This includes symptoms, treatment alternatives, drug properties and interactions, and preventive health-care measures.
12. Group behavior and dynamics, societal trends and influences, human migrations, ethnicity, cultures and their history and origins.

Abilities

Note: *The technical and functional abilities listed below are based on general occupational qualifications for Police, Fire and Ambulance Dispatchers commonly recognized by most employers. Typically, you will not be required to have all of the abilities listed to be a successful performer. Recruitment and selection standards for an individual state job must be based on the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities for that job as indicated in the job announcement and job description in the Employee Work Profile.*

The **Ability** to:

1. Listen to and understand information and ideas presented through spoken words and sentences.
2. Speak clearly so others can understand you.
3. Quickly make sense of, combine, and organize information into meaningful patterns.
4. Communicate information and ideas in speaking so others will understand.
5. Concentrate on a task over a period of time without being distracted.
6. Focus on a single source of sound in the presence of other distracting sounds.
7. Identify and understand the speech of another person.
8. Tell when something is wrong or is likely to go wrong. It does not involve solving the problem, only recognizing there is a problem.
9. Shift back and forth between two or more activities or sources of information (such as speech, sounds, touch, or other sources).
10. Arrange things or actions in a certain order or pattern according to a specific rule or set of rules (e.g., patterns of numbers, letters, words, pictures, mathematical operations).
11. See details at close range (within a few feet of the observer).
12. Communicate information and ideas in writing so others will understand.
13. Combine pieces of information to form general rules or conclusions (includes finding a relationship among seemingly unrelated events).
14. Remember information such as words, numbers, pictures, and procedures.
15. Read and understand information and ideas presented in writing.
16. Apply general rules to specific problems to produce answers that make sense.
17. Identify or detect a known pattern (a figure, object, word, or sound) that is hidden in other distracting material.
18. Choose quickly between two or more movements in response to two or more different signals (lights, sounds, pictures). It includes the speed with which the correct response is started with the hand, foot, or other body part.

19. Know your location in relation to the environment or to know where other objects are in relation to you.
20. Add, subtract, multiply, or divide quickly and correctly.

Tasks

Note: The following is a list of sample tasks typically performed by Police Dispatchers and State Police Dispatchers. Employees in this occupation will not necessarily perform all of the tasks listed.

1. Receives incoming calls by telephone or alarm system.
2. Coordinates emergency requests, and dispatches response units to emergency, using radio or alarm system.
3. Operates telecommunication equipment to relay information and messages to and from emergency site, and between law enforcement agencies.
4. Contacts officers to verify assignment locations.
5. Monitors alarm system to detect fires, illegal entry into establishments, or other emergencies.
6. Questions caller to determine nature of problem and type and number of personnel and equipment needed.
7. Determines response needed to emergency.
8. Questions caller, observes alarm register, and scans map, to determine if emergency is within service area.
9. Provides instructions to caller, utilizing knowledge of emergency medical care.
10. Scans status charts and computer screen to determine emergency units available for response.
11. Records details of calls, dispatches, and messages and maintains logs and files, using computer.
12. Tests and adjusts communication and alarm systems, and reports malfunctions to maintenance units.

INTERESTED?

Like people, occupations have traits or characteristic. These characteristics give important clues about the nature of the work and work environment, and give you an opportunity to match your own personal interests to a specific occupation. When you choose a job in an occupation that matches your own interests, you have taken an important step in planning a successful and rewarding career.

Dispatchers perform work that is Social and Conventional. The work is **Social** because it involves working with, communicating with, and teaching people. Social occupations often involve helping or providing service to others. The work is also **Conventional** because it involves following set procedures and routines. Conventional occupations can include working with data and details more than with ideas. Usually there is a clear line of authority to follow.

LICENSURE, REGISTRATION, OR CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

Employers may require a valid driver's license.

EDUCATIONAL, TRAINING, AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

1. Instructional programs for:
 - a. Administrative Assistant/Secretarial Science, General: An instructional program that generally prepares individuals to perform the duties of administrative assistants and/or secretaries and stenographers. Includes instruction in business communications, principles of business law, word processing and data entry, office machines operation and maintenance, office procedures, public relations, secretarial accounting, filing systems and records management, and report preparation.
 - b. Receptionist: An instructional program that prepares individuals to perform public relations duties for a business, organization, or answering service. Includes instruction in telephone answering techniques, responding to information requests, keeping caller and/or visitor records, placing business calls, operating telephone switchboards and/or other communications equipment, relaying incoming and interoffice calls, schedule maintenance, and public relations skills.
2. On-the-job training
3. Attendance at a technical or vocational school
4. Mentoring or coaching programs – learning through “expert” tutoring
5. College/university and community college systems
6. Supervisory and management training through the employer, colleges/universities/ community colleges, workshops and/or seminars

COMMONWEALTH COMPETENCIES

- Technical and Functional Expertise
- Achieve Results
- Serve the Customer
- Teamwork
- Interpersonal and Communication Skills
- Leadership and Personal Effectiveness
- Understanding the Business

The above competencies may be applied to employees throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. They can be rank-ordered by agencies and hiring managers to represent the needs of a specific job. The rank ordering will change depending upon the occupation, an organization's priorities, the actual job requirements, and the supervisor's preferences.

Career success is both about what you do (applying your technical knowledge, skills, and abilities) and how you do it (the consistent behaviors you demonstrate and choose to use) while interacting and communicating with others. Hopefully, by studying the Commonwealth competencies, identifying your developmental opportunities, and working to refine your own competence, you can take charge of your career!

For additional information about the **Commonwealth Competencies** go to: http://jobs.state.va.us/cc_planningctr.htm. For the competencies, we first list the competencies and then define each. Finally, we list competency indicators; to describe what successful performance looks like.

COMMONWEALTH CAREER PATH

Career opportunities in the Commonwealth are not limited to moving “up” to the next highest role and pay band, changing positions, or to becoming a supervisor. That’s because most roles describe a broad group of occupationally related positions that perform a range of work that requires increased knowledge and skills. For that reason, Commonwealth roles describe the career paths within the same or higher-level role for the same or different Career Group. The broad salary range and the Commonwealth’s pay practices provide flexibility in recognizing career development and advancement. ([Salary Structure](#))

For example:

Pay Band	Practitioner Role		Pay Band	Practitioner Role
3	Emergency Coordinator I	→	3	Emergency Coordinator I
				↓
4	Emergency Coordinator II	→	4	Emergency Coordinator II
				↓
5	Emergency Coordinator III	→	5	Emergency Coordinator III
				↓
			5	Emergency Coordinator Manager I
				↓
			6	Emergency Coordinator Manager II
				↓
			7	Emergency Coordinator Manager III

Sample Career Path

Emergency Coordinator I

The Emergency Coordinator I role provides career tracks for dispatchers or communications and operational duties in support of public safety, security, and law enforcement operations ranging from entry level to journey level. Employees function in communications or operation centers and in the field at incidents.

Emergency Coordinator II

The Emergency Coordinator II role provides career tracks for dispatchers and communication technicians whose responsibilities range from advanced level of lead workers to supervisors. This role also provides career tracks for emergency management specialists (recovery specialists/planners) whose responsibilities range from entry level to advanced level. Responsibilities include handling sensitive or dangerous cases, or serve in a planning function, collecting and organizing data to develop plans and delineate and direct resources to facilitate a

given level of response to emergency and disaster situations. The role also provided career tracks for fire fighters that perform fire-fighting responsibilities ranging from trainee to advanced level. Employees combat fires that have dangerous or explosive potential and involve the use of technical and specialized equipment.

Emergency Coordinator III

The Emergency Coordinator III role provides career tracks for fire fighters who supervise and direct the activities of several fire fighters in fire-fighting and rescue operations. (This role provides a dual career track for firefighters and emergency coordinators.)

Emergency Coordinator Manager I

The Emergency Coordinator Manager I role provides career tracks for managers who administer and coordinate emergency management and disaster preparedness programs for response, recovery, and mitigation in accordance with state and federal regulations. Responsibilities may also include supervising major functional areas, such as fire fighting for state level crisis operations during emergencies and disasters. (This role provides a dual career track for firefighters and emergency coordinators.)

Emergency Coordinator Manager II

The Emergency Coordinator Manager II role provides career tracks for managers that are operations and planning directors charged with the control of large groups of assets and resources directed toward a particular program area of Emergency Management. Responsibilities include supervising major functional areas for state level crisis operations during major emergencies or disasters.

Emergency Coordinator Manager III

The Emergency Coordinator Manager III role provides career tracks for the executive level managers acting as a deputy or an assistant to the agency head. Policy is defined at this level and interaction with the Governor's Secretaries or Executive Assistants is routine. Interaction with other agency leadership is also the norm. Global planning and operational ability and skilled, diplomatic leadership ability is expected.

ADDITIONAL OCCUPATIONAL INFORMATION CAN BE FOUND AT:

O*NET

http://online.onetcenter.org/gen_search_page

Virginia Employment Commission

<http://www.alex.vec.state.va.us/>

Career One Stop

<http://www.careeronestop.org/>

Virginia Career Resource Network

<http://www.vacrn.net/>